



Love to Swim School

## **Balancing Increases Swimming Efficiency**

Written by Mary Reilly-Magee

Simple rules of physics tell us that it is a lot easier and more efficient to swim on top of the water in a balanced, streamlined position than it is to run through it in a vertical, angled position. Just as the balance of your head and shoulders over your hips is important in running, so is balancing your head, chest and back in the water important to efficient swimming.

The most common mistake I see with non-swimmer triathletes is their head position when their face is in the water and when they rotate to breathe. Your head and your feet are connected, so whether you are swimming on your front or on your back, if your head is up your feet will be down, making you drag an unbalanced, angled body through the water. In order to get balanced you must get your head down, which will allow your feet to come up to the surface and create a more streamlined, efficient body position.

One way to determine your balance in the water is to make yourself a ball and just float. Your head, neck and spine should be in line as you hold your knees to your chest and hold your breath. What will happen is your body will float to the surface and position itself in a balanced way. Essentially, the water will tell you where it wants you to be. From that position you can slowly extend your arms and legs out into a streamline position.

Another technique I borrowed from Coach Bill Boomer and use to teach balance in a front prone position is the method of putting your eyes on the bottom of the pool while blowing bubbles and pressing the center of your chest toward the bottom. This pressing technique is called pressing your buoy. It creates a stabilizing effect that allows you to move through the water more efficiently. The hard part and the key are to maintain this stable body position as you roll your body to breathe. If you allow your hip to rotate first, with the shoulder and head following it, your eyes should move from the bottom of the pool to the sky or ceiling, as the case may be. By looking at the ceiling, your head is forced to stay in the streamlined position of your balanced body because you haven't broken your streamline by lifting your head to breathe.

As difficult as this may sound, it can become fairly easy as long as you allow your hip to move first as you roll to breathe instead of lifting your head. The head and chest are the stabilizing forces in a balanced, efficient body's movement through the water.